

Listen to Kissinger and CIA's William Burns and Compare with Populist Political Platitudes

By [Jan Oberg](#)

Global Research, July 17, 2022

[The Transnational](#) 19 May 2022

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the "Translate Website" drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Visit and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

First published by globalresearch.ca on May 30, 2022

This short article aims to merely illustrate – not prove – the difference between security political [intellectualism](#) and ignorance. It does not focus on peace – theories, ideas, concept or policies – simply because none of the personalities appearing below are in the business of peace.

By means of some videos, I aim to illustrate the differences between security political intellectualism and the kind of populist rhetorics that has become so widespread. Weapons have been around for decades but mostly managed by elites who operated within some kind of intellectual framework – agreeing or not agreeing with its characteristics is not the point here.

Most people who conducted security politics decades ago were well-educated and experienced compared with most of today's security political decision-makers.

This overall *intellectual disarmament* coupled to ever-higher levels of *military armament* and the recent talk about *the use of nuclear weapons* creates a new and extremely dangerous reality for us all.

Recently, the Financial Times published two important interviews – one with *Dr Henry Kissinger* and one with the *CIA's present director, William J Burns*. The conversations circle around the *NATO-Russia conflict* and the *war in Ukraine* – but certainly also the image of China and what role China plays – or should play – in the US foreign policy thinking

Here is [Henry Kissinger](#), born in 1923 and, thus, almost 99 years old when speaking here:

You may also like to see this short one where Kissinger talks about what *must* be done to avoid armed conflict with China:

And here is [William Burns](#), born in 1956 and with a very diverse career in US foreign policy; – he is a tremendous improvement from his fundamentalist Christian charlatan predecessor, Mike Pompeo:

And here Burns gives a 30 min lecture without manuscript or notes, covering US relations with Asia/China, Russia and the Middle East – a delightful geo-political grasp of the bigger picture. It's from 2018.

It is *not* that he has one word of criticism of the US itself – except when it comes to Trump, the president at the time he spoke. But there is a knowledge and clarity that makes one wish to debate with him.

Regrettably, with most of today's European leaders, one would hardly feel it meaningful.

Given what they stand for, neither Kissinger nor Burns is – so to speak – my cup of tea. However, in an era in which every discourse of peace has disappeared – or, *been disappeared* – perhaps some people might listen to people like Kissinger and Burns whose profession has always been more war than peace – but on a solid intellectual foundation?

Their cohesive way of reasoning in a low voice – Kissinger in particular with his world perspective and geo-political professionalism and both with a larger perspective – contrasts most of those who make security political decisions today who often display a frightening lack of knowledge, conceptual foundation and ability to look at things in a larger perspective – time as well as space.

There is a clarity of mind growing out of a reservoir of comprehensive knowledge and personal experience. There is no manuscript, no uhs, ums or likes, no pauses or contradictions. What is said is integrated, consolidated.

These two foreign policy experts never sink to the level of populist rhetorics and know-nothingism.

*

Sadly, that is what we've just witnessed several European politicians, including NATO S-G Jens Stoltenberg and Sweden's and Finland's prime ministers at their decision to join the alliance, do. The same applies to most of those who have shaped the EU/NATO response to Russia's war on Ukraine. Some of it is close to embarrassing, offensive to the intelligence of the average citizens.

When the Swedish government had decided to apply, [prime minister Magdalena Andersson argued](#) on May 16, 2022, that “while there might be things we Swedes disagree about, there is one thing we all share: We want to live in this free and democratic Sweden that we all love so much. That is a Sweden that is worth defending, and Sweden is best defended inside NATO.”

In other words and quite absurdly: Since the Swedes love their country, the government wants to join NATO to protect it. Why on earth Sweden that has been non-aligned for more than 200 years suddenly joins NATO cannot possibly be explained by such irrelevant marketing [gibberish](#).

Here is a video from about three weeks before the two countries joined under the two female PMs leadership. It seems difficult to find a sentence which is based on some kind of intellectual substance. Most of it comes closer to a middle school essay.

Such populist rhetorics defies every sense of analyses and serious arguments pro et contra. Platitudes can hardly be disputed and, so, every intellectualism has disappeared.

Why is that, by and large, European politicians can't do it better than this?

This type of superficiality, the lack of grounding in a rational analysis and a principled policy, makes it possible – if not likely – that standpoints can easily be changed.

For instance, as late as in January [the Finnish PM, Sanna Marin, said it would be “very unlikely” Finland would apply for a NATO membership during her term in office](#). (While Russia's invasion of Ukraine took place on February 24, it was still a very tense situation in which she stated that). [Euractive adds](#) that “It is also widely accepted in Finland that a referendum should precede a NATO application. For the first time, fewer than half (42%) oppose NATO membership, while 28% have said they are ready to join.”

Compare that with her harsh, almost Russophobic rhetorics in [this interview in May 2022](#).

*

Back to both Burns and Kissinger. They both seem keenly aware of the *dangers* humanity is facing – while of course not stating that the present situation, to a high degree, has been caused by their own country and by NATO.

Note also that both consider China the by far most serious adversary of the United States. And, therefore, that there is a larger perspective on the war in Ukraine. I believe Burns is getting it wrong when it comes to President Xi Jinping's/China's perception of the Ukraine war – and wrongly leaves out its much stronger opposition to NATO's expansion and what conclusions China will draw from that concerning Taiwan and other issues.

Interesting is also Kissinger's emphasis on how counterproductive it would be – actually, is – for the United States to behave in a way that makes Russia and China come more strongly together against the US. One does not get the impression that there are any NATO or EU decision-makers who have looked that far in time and space while meting out the punishment of Russia right after its invasion of Ukraine.

Neither does it seem that the US itself has the faintest idea that its consistent Cold War policy – which TFF has documented in [“Behind the Smokescreen. An Analysis of the West's Destructive Cold War Agenda and Why It Must Stop”](#) (2021) – now coupled with its attempt to make Ukraine a full NATO member could have that effect and tying a series of countries such as Russia, India, Iran, China as well as the larger part of the Middle East and Africa closer together.

In summary, let's not forget that the most important division these years is hardly between different informed opinions but between those who know and those who are ignorant. In my view, the latter have the upper hand at this phase of the West's decline.

And that is dangerous. Dangerous as hell.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

Jan Oberg is director at the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research in Lund, Sweden. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

The original source of this article is [The Transnational](#)

Copyright © [Jan Oberg](#), [The Transnational](#), 2022

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jan Oberg](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca